



Welcome to Historic Denver's Molly Brown House Museum!

Together we will explore **this** home and the story of a woman you may know as “**Molly.**” The true story however of **Margaret** Tobin Brown reveals a leader and activist whose **lasting legacy** shows the impact we all can have when we rally a community around a common cause.



Another person in this house's history who left behind a legacy is Art Leisenring, the owner of this House of Lions in the 1960s. When it came time for Art to move on, he worried that if he put 1340 Pennsylvania up for sale, it would be torn down like other houses on the block. In a grassroots effort, he gathered community members and together they founded Historic Denver, Inc. to save and restore the Molly Brown House.

50 years on, Historic Denver continues to own and operate the Molly Brown House Museum. And, as a leading preservation organization, we advocate on behalf of the diverse places and spaces all around the city. We know that historic places and the history they reveal can inspire us to take collective action today and ensure a better future for all; a vision shared, no doubt, by Art Leisenring and Margaret Brown.

Enjoy your tour and thank you for supporting Historic Denver!

Exhibit Introduction

This year we celebrate Historic Denver’s 50th anniversary of preserving the places that matter at its first save – the Molly Brown House Museum! Through an in-house exhibit, *Looking Forward / Looking Back*, you’ll learn about the work undertaken to restore each room, find treasures that tell the Brown family story, and meet the founders of Historic Denver.

Together we will also explore the story of a woman you may know as “Molly” Brown, but the true story of Margaret Tobin Brown reveals a community leader and activist whose **lasting legacy** shows the impact we all can have when we rally a community around a common cause.



There is another person in this house’s history who also left behind a legacy. In the late 1960s, Art Leisenring owned this home, known then as the House of Lions. When it came time for Art to move on, he worried that if he put 1340 Pennsylvania up for sale, it would be torn down like other houses on the block. In a grassroots effort, he gathered other community members and together they founded Historic Denver, Inc. to save and restore the Molly Brown House.

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Please feel free to pause at any point to learn more on the exhibit panels you'll see throughout the house. Enjoy your tour and thank you for supporting Historic Denver!

Entry Hall – The Home of James Joseph and Margaret Brown

It was in 1894 that James Joseph, known as J.J., and Margaret Tobin Brown made 1340 Pennsylvania their home. Within a year of moving from Hannibal, MO to Leadville, CO, Margaret found herself married to this well-educated and charming miner. By 1889 the Browns were parents to two children, Lawrence Palmer, known as Larry, and Catherine Ellen, known as Helen.

This Entrance Hall to their home was the first and often only room a guest would see, so it was elaborately decorated and provided clues about the family's social status, education, and personal interests. The walls were painted gold to reflect the pride the Browns had in J.J.'s tremendous gold strike.



Entry Hall 1910

In the 1890s, J.J. had invested wisely and lent his engineering skills to the IBEX Mining Company's Little Johnny mine. His efforts helped produce the greatest gold ore strike of any mine in North America at the time, bringing in as much as 1,000 tons of high grade ore per day in the early years, and they employed more miners than the next seven Colorado mines combined.

This also meant that the Browns quietly amassed a considerable fortune, allowing them to purchase this fashionable and modern home in an up and coming Denver neighborhood. The house had all of the modern conveniences, including electricity, hot and cold running water, central heat, and a telephone – a perfect house for a young family looking to make their mark on Denver.

After moving in, the Browns became accomplished travelers; Margaret and J.J. even embarked on a world tour of India, China, and Japan. You will see souvenirs from their travels in this room as well as throughout the house.

Later in life Mrs. Brown was quoted as saying, “Some people smirked when I brought home ancient statuary from Egypt and decorated up a few acres of the Rocky Mountains for my home, but I am sure that those who know the place will agree that culture knows no boundaries and that fine arts are international.”

What souvenirs do you bring home from your travels?

Drawing Room – Margaret’s Voting Rights Work

In an account given by daughter Helen in 1957, she wrote that the Drawing Room was only used for grand occasions and receiving visitors. She herself would sneak in here to leave her French porcelain dolls on the sofa, as she thought this was the best place for fancy toys.

Look around you’ll see several paintings, including one of a mountain scene above the fireplace done by Helen Henderson Chain, a female artist painting in Colorado during the Brown’s time. On the fireplace mantel is a Japanese tray which the Brown’s brought back from their world tour. Japan was a country both of the Browns enjoyed visiting.

When not travelling, Mrs. Brown was active in Denver’s suffrage movement. When they moved into this house in 1894, women in Colorado had achieved the right to vote. Colorado was the first state to pass women’s suffrage by popular vote, following the Wyoming and Utah territories.

To gain the right to vote nationally, Margaret joined the Congressional Union for Women’s Suffrage and the Political Equality League. She helped lead, as well as fund, national efforts to secure votes as women of all classes collectively demanded this right. Pressure was placed on both the federal government and state governments to include women as full voting citizens.

Margaret's campaign photo from a run for local public office



The efforts of generations of women were finally victorious in 1920 with the ratification and passage of the 19th Amendment, granting most women the right to vote. It would take the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act to ensure women of color could also have unrestricted access to the ballot. **What voting rights issues do we face today?**

Margaret herself was urged by members of the suffrage movement to run for U.S. Senate in 1914. Never before had a woman entered the United States Senate, and the fact that Margaret was being urged to do so was a big deal. Headlines saying “Mrs. Brown for Congress” flooded newspapers across the country.

“If I do go to the Senate,” Mrs. Brown told a reporter, “I shall naturally be specifically interested in all matters relating to women and children. In general, I shall stand for the human side of every question.”

Library –Margaret’s Love for Languages and Education

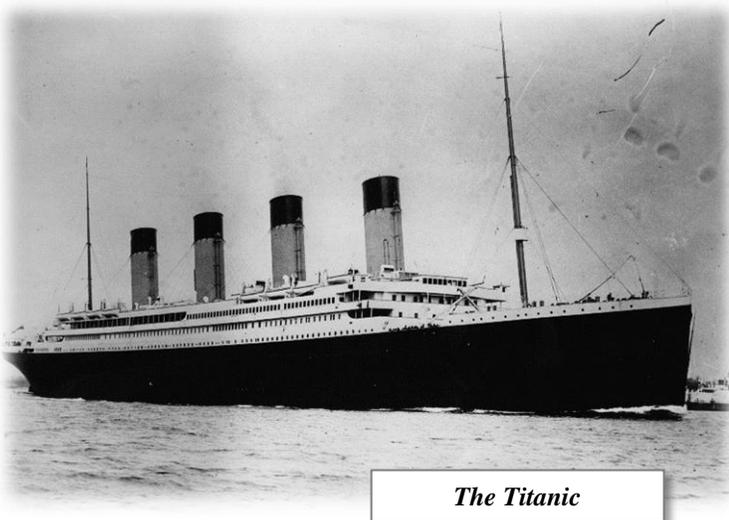
The Library reflected Margaret’s love of learning. While living in Leadville and then in Denver, she hired tutors to teach her family art, music, and languages. She spoke French, Italian, German, and Russian as well as some Gaelic and Greek.

Both of the children attended school here in Denver, with Larry at Sacred Heart and Helen at Loretto Heights Academy. Larry was then off to East Coast schools while Helen went to boarding schools in

France and Germany.

Margaret attended classes at the Carnegie Institute when they opened up a women's college. Speaking to a reporter in 1922, Margaret said, "Shouldn't a passion for knowledge count for something in one's own development?"

Margaret was also a writer. Her travel essays were published in the Denver, and other city's, newspapers. She wrote mostly about her experiences traveling the world, including her observations of the caste system while visiting India.



The Titanic

In the aftermath of the Titanic, Margaret corresponded with fellow Titanic survivor Colonel Archibald Gracie IV. In a letter to him she announced she would be writing an autobiography, which years later she did submit to a New York publisher. Unfortunately it was never

published and any copies have been lost to history. **If you wrote your memoirs, what would you like future generations to know about you?**

The Study – James Joseph “J.J.” Brown

To run his extensive mining business, J.J. kept offices in Denver, Leadville, and here at home. On the desk are copies of his mining papers, including his claim to part ownership in the Little Johnny

Mine. Above the desk is a map of Leadville, CO featuring all the mining properties, including J.J.'s Little Johnny mine.

An account written in 1895 about J.J. said “Mr. Brown is better known throughout the state as ‘the miner’s friend’... He is generous to a fault and puts his hand in his pocket to aid others oftener than he does his own interests. He possesses qualifications of nobility, honesty and liberality worthy of the emulation of all humanity...”

Above the fireplace, you can see a hand-drawn plan of the first floor done by daughter Helen. She labelled this room “Father’s Room.” In a letter, she recalled her father and Grandfather, John Tobin, often sitting in this room discussing mining and politics.

The Browns were a philanthropic couple, each championing a variety of causes. In December of each year, J.J. presented the boys at St. Vincent’s Orphan Asylum with Christmas gifts. J.J. reportedly felt that he owed these children something for the loss of their fathers in the mines.

Dining Room – Discover Margaret’s Causes

One of the largest parties Mrs. Brown hosted here was a garden party in 1910. With over 800 guests, it was written about in great detail by the Denver newspapers. *Where did all of those people fit, you ask?* Margaret had rugs placed on the lawn and tents set up and entertained most of her guests outside.

Many of these events served as fundraisers for Margaret and J.J.’s favorite causes. Margaret was particularly interested in children’s

welfare. Through the Denver Club she helped build playgrounds and orphanages. She also supported the work of Judge Benjamin Barr Lindsey, the man who started Denver's Juvenile Court System.

What causes do you like to support?

Judge Lindsey was also Margaret's strongest champion when she made the bold choice to consider a bid for the U.S. Senate. Following the advice, however, of several here in CO, including friend state Senator Helen Ring Robinson, Margaret decided not to formally run for US Senate. With the onset of WWI, Margaret went to off France, where she spent the next several years helping to set up nursing stations, driving ambulances, and then helping to rebuild Northern France after the war.

Sun Room – Margaret's Favorite Room

We have just come up the grand staircase and we are now in a small west-facing sitting room called the Sun Room. According to family members, this space was Margaret's favorite in the house. Here she entertained close friends or family, wrote letters and planned events. The balcony, through the exterior door, was where newspapers reported a small orchestra played during the aforementioned 800 person garden party.

The Third Floor and Servant's Bedroom – What Was Here?

Today this 3rd floor space is used for events. Based on recollections from the family and others who lived here, the third floor was originally divided into several rooms. These were only accessible by

the back servant's stairs until 1908, when the Browns had the front grand staircase extended to the third floor.

Accounts say that this large area was two rooms with the right half closest to the street used as a nursery for the Brown children. The left, or back half of the space was living space for a nanny, other staff, or extended family.

It is undetermined if or when this room was made into one space as it was divided into apartments when it became a museum in 1970 and Historic Denver turned it into one large room for programming purposes.

The small bedroom tucked under the eaves belonged to any female live-in servants. They would have likely used chamber pots and wash stands rather than the family bathroom located on the 2nd floor.



Margaret and Mary

Based on archives and census data, we know that one of the Brown's servants was Mary Mulligan. Mary worked as a maid and seamstress for Mrs. Brown and also helped with other duties; family stories say that Margaret and Mary were as much friends as employer/maid. We also know that Mary traveled with the Browns on their around-the-world trip to India, China, and Japan, based on passport documents and a photograph of Margaret and Mary dressed in kimono.

Helen's Room – Daughter Helen Brown Benziger

This bedroom belonged to daughter Catherine Ellen, known as Helen, who was about to turn five when the family moved here in April 1894. Helen first attended school at the Loretto Heights Academy here in Denver, then schooled in France before finishing in Germany. Like her mother she was an accomplished singer and actress and was often on stage during her mother's fundraisers, including serving as queen of the Mountain-Plains Festival.

Helen married a publisher named George Benziger and they settled in New York. They had two sons, James and George Peter. Later in life Helen remarked that, "When Larry and I were young, we thought we had the best mother in Denver." It was through daughter Helen and grandson James that we have many great stories about daily life for the Browns in this home. Helen passed away in 1970 just before the call was raised to save this house and turn it into a museum.

Margaret's Room – Suffragist and Adventurer

In this private retreat, Margaret wrote letters, planned her political campaigns, and read magazines that told her how to dress, raise her children, and champion for the right to vote.

After 1911, Margaret rented a large home in Newport, Rhode Island, to be closer to her friends in the suffrage movement. She helped organize the 1914 Conference of Great Women with Alva Vanderbilt Belmont and attended Congressional Union meetings with Alice Paul.

Later in her life, Margaret pursued a career on stage, enrolling in acting school in Paris; she performed the works of Sarah Bernhardt many times. Margaret also played zither and guitar, and as you learned, also studied the art of yodeling. In 1929, Margaret received the French Palm of the Academy, like an Oscar, for her many talents.

Reflecting on her life, Margaret stated that, “I am a daughter of adventure. This means I never experience a dull moment and must be prepared for any eventuality. I never know when I may go up in an airplane and come down with a crash, or go motoring and climb a pole, or go off for a walk in the twilight and return all mussed up in an ambulance. That’s my arc, as astrologers would say. It’s a good one, too, for a person who had rather make a snap-out than a fade-out of life.”

In 1932, Margaret received the French Legion of Honor for her work during WWI with the Red Cross. Margaret helped rehabilitate blinded soldiers by creating a school for them to learn Braille, having the works of fellow Missourian Mark Twain translated into Braille for the soldiers to read.



*Legion of Honor
Medal*

Margaret Tobin Brown died at the Barbizon Hotel in New York City in October of 1932 from a stroke caused by a brain tumor. After WWI and J.J.'s death, she had found New York City to be an exciting place to live. Both Margaret and J.J. are buried in Holy Rood Cemetery, Long Island, New York, near the home of their daughter Helen.

J.J.'s Room – A Man Without Peer

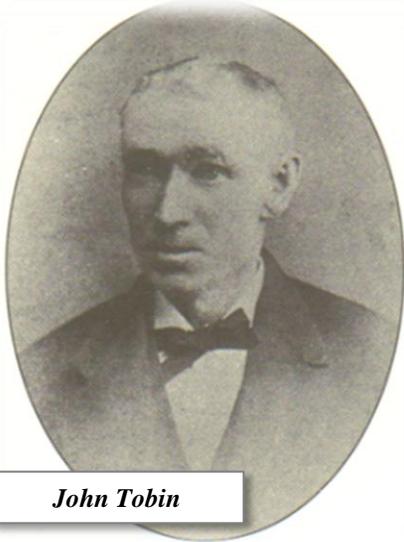


J.J.

In 1899, J.J. consolidated all of his mining interests under the Jefferson Mining and Investment Company, with mines in Colorado, Utah, Arizona, and real estate in Salt Lake City. J.J. never gave up on making another big find in Leadville. In 1902 he became principal partner in a group called the Evans Gulch Group that began acquiring claims northwest of Leadville. These claims would never amount to much but, like the Ibez Mining CO. remained in the Brown family well after J.J., Margaret's, and even son Larry's death.

By himself, J.J. traveled extensively as well, including as far as Cuba and Mexico, for his mining interests. Like Margret, he also had another home, his in Tucson, Arizona. By the late 1910s, J.J.'s health was suffering from his many years spent mining. He passed away in 1922 of a heart attack while staying with his daughter Helen in New York. When asked by a reporter, Margaret said, "I've never met a finer, bigger more worthwhile man than J.J. Brown... I salute his memory and claim him to have been without peer."

Guest Room – Meet the Family & Learn the House’s History



John Tobin

Letters and census records show an evolving list of relatives, wards, and friends who came and went from this house. In fact, so many relatives lived here at one point, the Browns rented a house down the street for a time to accommodate them all.

Margaret’s parents, John and Johanna Tobin, both lived here at the end of their lives. The Tobins were both hard-working Irish immigrants whose American Dream included an education for their six children. Daughter Margaret was born in 1867 in their home which was located just blocks from the banks of the Mississippi River in Hannibal, MO.



Johanna Tobin

Margaret was born just after the Civil War had ended and Hannibal had been in the middle of a complicated war fought over enslavement. Her parents were against slavery and taught their children to believe in universal human rights.

How have your parent’s views shaped your beliefs?

Margaret’s three nieces from her brother Daniel also lived here for a short time after their mother passed away. Florence, Grace, and Helen Tobin each went on to be accomplished performers and

humanitarians. Niece Helen was closest to Margaret and was often confused as her daughter. During her Aunt Margaret's suffrage work, Helen remarked to newspapers that she didn't understand all the fuss about women getting the right to vote.

Larry's room – Son Lawrence “Larry” Palmer Brown

After finishing school, Larry attended the Colorado School of Mines, following in his father's footsteps. When it became clear the U.S. would enter the war, a now married Larry enrolled in officer's school. As a Captain, he was deployed to France in August 1918 as part of the American Expeditionary Forces.

In late September, Larry was hit with mustard gas and was in the hospital for two months recovering. Larry was awarded a Victory Medal for helping to break the Hindenburg Line and received an honorable discharge in 1919.



Larry

After the war Larry divorced his first wife Eileen, with whom he had two children. Soon after he married Hollywood actress, Mildred Gregory. Larry had met Mildred while working in the silent film industry. Larry and Mildred eventually returned to Leadville, CO where he served the Director of the Colorado Mining Association.

Larry, aged 61, died in Leadville in 1949. Larry gifted many family papers and photos to the state historical society with the caveat

they not be opened for 25 years. Historic Denver gained access to those archives in 1974 and they became invaluable for understanding the Brown family and their legacy, as well as for restoring this home.

The Kitchen and Pantries – A Servant’s Life

Each of these kitchen spaces had to undergo complete restoration in the 1970s as they had served as multiple modern kitchens at a later time in the house’s history. During the Brown’s time, this would have been a bustling hub of servant activity, as they prepared meals, managed the household, and received deliveries.

In the 1900 census the Brown’s had five servants, including a cook, a maid, and a hostler who cared for the horses. Some servant’s lived here on site, while others were “day help” and had homes of their own to return to in the evening.

In addition to the house here, the Browns had a summer home, Avoca Lodge, which they built 12 miles from here near Morrison, Colorado. It was here that J.J. started a poultry business, where they raised prize-winning chickens and pigeons, with coops that held over 10,000 birds. These birds were sold to restaurants around the city, and served here at 1340 Penn.

J.J. planted crops of alfalfa, wheat, and experimental sugar beets, as he was an investor, along with mining partner John Champion, in Colorado's early sugar beet industry. There are numerous newspaper articles that tell of picnics, barn dances, and all manner of entertaining done by the family at Avoca Lodge. While not a museum, you can still visit this home which serves as an event center.

The Back Porch – Margaret’s Role as “Heroine of the Titanic”

In 1912, while Margaret was traveling in Egypt with her friends the Astors, she received a telegram from son Larry whose son was ill. Margaret boarded the first ship home, the RMS Titanic. Due to its watertight compartments and bulkheads, it was remarked at the time that the White Star Line’s Titanic was “practically unsinkable.”

A few days into the journey, the ship struck an iceberg on its starboard side. Margaret was in her room reading when she felt the bump. After dressing warmly and grabbing around \$500, she headed up to the deck and began to help women and children into the lifeboats.

To a Denver reporter, Margaret recounted that “I went on the deck [as] the boats were being lowered, I found many opportunities to be useful and I was glad to be. The less you think of yourself at such times, the better off you are.”

While assisting others, she herself was picked up and dropped into lifeboat number 6 which would be picked up by the Carpathia hours later. Margaret helped others once on Carpathia by using her language skills to translate and comfort survivors. And, she co-chaired the Titanic Survivors Committee which raised money for the many destitute women and children. When they docked in New York, the world was devastated by the news that 1,500 crew and passengers had been lost, including Margaret’s friend John Jacob Astor.

As Chair of the Survivor’s Committee, Margaret returned to New York City in May to present a trophy and award medals to the

Captain and crew of the Carpathia. Margaret also made it her life's work to ensure that all crew and passengers lost were remembered. You can also read her full account of the disaster which was published by newspapers in 1912.

For all of her efforts to assist and support survivors, Margaret Brown was dubbed the “Heroine of the Titanic” by press and fellow passengers. Speaking to a Denver Post reporter about how poorly prepared the Titanic was for an emergency, Margaret said, “The Titanic disaster was a tragedy that was as unnecessary as running the Brown Palace Hotel into Pikes Peak.”

Presentation of the Loving Cup

Stories of courage, heroism, and self-sacrifice are woven throughout the Titanic's final hours. These stories can remind us of life's preciousness, and how such disasters can unite people into a common cause in order to help one another.



The Legacy Continues...

After Margaret Brown died in 1932, obituaries recounted a full life dedicated to humanitarian and social justice causes as a community leader and activist. Also after her death the legends grew due to newspaper articles, then books, then a play, then movies. While these fictional accounts of her life were inaccurate, they sparked interest in preserving her home, the House of Lions. **MOLLY BROWN** is a

name she never used during her life, but given to her by journalists and playwrights who obscured the true story of an outspoken and independent woman.

Also after her death, 1340 Pennsylvania Street became a boarding house, an apartment building, and after Art Leisenring purchased it in 1958, rooms for rent for ‘men only.’ Art knew of the house’s history and its famous owner, Margaret Brown. He collected a scrapbook to tell this story and then helped found Historic Denver, Inc. to preserve the home when his ownership came to an end. His grassroots community work sparked a citywide preservation movement still going strong today.

Margaret and J.J. Brown left a lasting legacy as people engaged in their community with a desire to make Denver a better city for all. Art Leisenring continued the cause when his call to action started Historic Denver. **Today we leave you with one last question... How can you be a champion for the causes that matter most to your community?**

Please consider supporting our work by making a donation or become a member. Visit HistoricDenver.org now and we thank you for touring the Molly Brown House Museum!

